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ABSTRACT

The Strategies for Change and Knowledge Utilization (SfCKU) watched nine colleges as the individual schools deliberated internally regarding any proposed programmatic change that would have substantial impact on undergraduate education. SfCKU would thereby gain access to decisionmaking in complex organizations. This document details the activities at the University of South Carolina (USC) following their acceptance of the SfCKU offer. The USC change concerned the establishment of the Bachelor of General Studies (BGS) degree, intended to contain curricular innovations. This paper focuses on the ad hoc committee formed to meet the issues raised by the BGS proposal, their problems, and their ultimate success. The key success of the ad hoc group was that it opened a direct line of communication for faculty reactions to the university administrators. (Author/PG)

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Strategies for Change:

The Role of the Internal Agent

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Consider the banana. Slippery in one form, edible in another, enjoyable in most, and guaranteed to rot if ignored. The prospects for achieving change and self renewal in complex organizations, specifically universities, are similar: slippery in many forms, enjoyable in most, and guaranteed to produce rot if ignored.

The Strategies for Change and Knowledge Utilization (SfCKU) project arrived on the University of South Carolina (USC) campus as it did on most, in the form of a letter from the project director that elicited a positive response from the chief college administrator to whom it had been addressed. The offer was intriguing, the acceptance immediate, and the results instructive. The idea? A simple one. SfCKU would watch each of the nine colleges invited to join the consortium as the individual schools deliberated internally regarding any proposed programmatic change which would, if adopted, have substantial impact on undergraduate education. SfCKU would thereby gain access to decision making in complex organizations.

USC would, in turn be able to draw on the consultants and

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and questionnaires supplied by SfCKU, thereby gaining (a) outside evaluation of attempted changes, (b) a relatively impartial ("Dutch Uncle") critic of USC operations, and (c) data concerning student and faculty opinion of USC. And thus was the wedding performed. At the time of the project's inception USC could be typified in numerous ways. It had a strong, albeit benevolent, central administration as well as a large, but basically lethargic, faculty. The university had just established for itself a Faculty Senate, but that was a largely reactive body - empowered to act for the faculty, but not directed in its mission.

The focal concept was an experimental college initially proposed during fall 1971. It had been designed to be all things to all people. It would offer a 120 hour bachelor's degree without any specific curriculum requirements, it would foster experimentation by faculty in the design of new courses, and would, indeed, support a wide variety of research, especially that focused on teaching techniques. It was the breadth of the original proposal that caused the greatest difficulty for it. What was finally offered for the approval of the faculty senate was a Bachelor of General Studies degree that also attempted to include support for faculty interested in curricular and teaching innovations.

The compromise that was ultimately approved in late spring 1972 preserved the concept of a 120 hour degree with no specific curriculum demands, but did so by including a three man faculty supervisory committee for each student's program, and dispensing with the attempt to lodge support for experimentation only in one college. During the course of the deliberations which surrounded what came to be known as the "BGS proposal," USC established in fall 1971 a SfCKU task

force composed of members representing both sides of the philosophical split which developed around the BGS. Neither the "liberals" arguing for no controls other than record keeping and minimal advising nor the "conservatives" who advocated that control of the students degree program necessitated faculty input and endorsement were espoused by the task force. The SfCKU group decided to remain neutral in the debate and simply to observe and measure change as it occurred.

Thus, during spring 1972 the Institutional Functioning Inventory (IFI) was given to 25% of the faculty, while the College and University Environment Scale (CUES) and the Experience of College Questionnaire (ECQ) was administered to about 3% (500) of the student body. This data ultimately came to serve two purposes: First, it provided a measure of faculty and student opinions regarding USC before the start of the BGS program, and it now provides comparative data for the ongoing readministration of these questionnaires during spring 1974 now that the BGS program has been in operation for two years. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the IFI, CUES, and ECQ data became available in mid-summer 1972, shortly after the Faculty Senate had established an Academic Forward Planning Committee (AFPC) to work with the central administration on long range planning for institutional growth and development. It had long been sensed that the administration did not have such a unit, and a number of the issues raised by the faculty in its debates surrounding the BGS degree made apparent the absence of such a unit in the faculty organization.

The initial BGS proposal was advanced through the normal faculty committee structure, but was tabled in fall 1971 in the

Faculty Senate when initially reported out of committee. The next six months saw considerable behind the scenes activity as the central issues of faculty control over the BGS student's programs and university support for curricular and teaching innovation were argued long and hard. Finally the issues were separated, the BGS including a three person faculty review and approval committee was approved by the Faculty Senate, and the issue of university support for innovation was set aside for the time.

My focus in this paper, however, is not upon the contents of the debate over the past several years, nor even the formal process itself, but rather a most fascinating ad hoc group formed in late summer of 1972 in response to some issues laid bare by the initial BGS proposal. As USC's institutional representative to the Strategies for Change Project, I was faced with writing a final report in June 1972 concerning all of the activities that had surrounded the SfCKU task force during its first year of existence. It was a most educational experience as it represented the first time I had ever stepped back to consider the process---the significant facilitators and inhibitors---of faculty decision making.

It became apparent during the writing of that report that conservative members of faculty, generally but not exclusively post-40 in age, had a significant impact on all proposals considered in the Faculty Senate. It became apparent that, whether deliberately or not, daily coffe hour discussions in the university's Faculty Club tended to lend great and well founded consistency to the conservative view point in Faculty Senate debates. In addition to well placed committee assignments throughout the formal committee structure,

conservatives tended to have a focused impact on faculty debate as a result of consistency of argument in floor presentations. The result can best be diplomatically labeled as a significant lack of dynamism in typifying faculty actions in the immediately preceding years.

In order to more effectively counteract this conservative inertia, I proposed the formation of a small discussion group of faculty innovators, generally more normally distributed with regard to age, albeit perhaps skewed toward the post-40 age levels. It was my suggestion that such a group be formed to meet sufficiently often so as to be well informed on upcoming Senate business---more frequently as issues arose, less frequently as demanded by Senate inactivity.

The group first met during August 1972 in the form of four younger members of the faculty, including myself. The initial topic of discussion was the best manner in which to enlarge the group so as to have a significant impact on faculty opinion. It was decided to expand the group in two stages. First, by consensus among the four present we enlarged the group to 12. Second, at the first meeting of the larger group the following week we suggested that each member be encouraged to bring one additional member with him or her to the group's third meeting.

The consensus enlargement from 4 to 12 was focused on achieving two things. First it was desired that the "liberal" and pro-innovation emphasis be preserved. Second, it was intended that other philosophical points of view be reflected in group discussions. This latter was intended to keep the group's thinking both fresh in response to

challenge and enlightened as regards possible bases for challenge in subsequent "campaigns."

The first topic addressed by the third meeting of the fully enlarged group was that of nominating a chair for the Faculty Senate in the upcoming September meeting. Considerable discussion surrounded the issue, and it was finally decided to move that election procedures be changed so that in the current and future elections only a chair-elect would be elected who would, in turn, succeed to the office of chair in the following year. This agreed, the group fell to debating who would be an adequate chair. After much discussion it was agreed a moderate would be the best choice. A number of people were considered, but the choice was narrowed to one. The others who had been discussed were contacted, informed of the group's reasons for its selection, and all agreed to withdraw if nominated.

Much less debate surrounded the group's choice for chair-elect and armed with the two names a subtle campaign was initiated. The results are easy to relate. The group's move to elect a chair-elect in that and subsequent years was adopted. The group's nominee for chair was elected without opposition and the chair-elect had one other nomination offered in competition, but the person nominated withdrew his name, and the chair-elect won by acclaimation.

Flushed with early success, the group adopted a pattern of meeting once a month during 1973-74, nine days prior to each Senate meeting. The agenda was always open to all suggestions with nothing formally presented. Any member was free to contribute any topic and position at any meeting, but nothing was prearranged. Some meetings were short, over by 10 P.M.; others went on until 2 A.M. -- on a school night!

After a fall of monthly meetings in which attendance quickly

IFI, CUES, and ECQ questionnaire data became available during the summer of 1972 and worked its way through the faculty committee structure during fall 1972. The data quite consistently demonstrated significant pockets of faculty concern including the desire for more intellectual atmosphere, a scattered resentment of the power wielded by the central university administration, and receptivity to innovative solutions to long standing problems. When the IFI and related data were made available to the faculty's Academic Forward Planning Committee, the AFPC endorsed the administration of the Institutional Goals Inventory (IGI) to all members of the faculty and administration to facilitate discussion of institutional goals.

The strategy by which this endorsement was enacted is an instructive commentary on the impact of the ad hoc discussion group on faculty decision making. At a workshop, sponsored by SfCKU during late January 1973 and attended by six members of the USC faculty and administration--all members of the ad hoc group-- a strategy was developed for presenting the IGI to the Senate for its endorsement and help in administering it to the faculty.

The plan involved presentation of the IFI and related data to the Senate at its February meeting along with a brief analysis indicating the nature of the opinions reflected in that data and the manner in which the IGI would facilitate AFPC planning to respond to the expressions of faculty concern. Following Senate endorsement of administration of the IGI, it was planned that the IGI be sent to each Senator along with instructions to complete the questionnaire and bring it and any questions or concerns about it to the March meeting

of the Senate. It was intended that following a question and answer session in March the Senators would then be used to deliver the IGI to their colleagues and to hound those colleagues into a guilt invoked(?) response. The questionnaires were to be collected in late March, scored in April and reported to the Senate at its May meeting, the last of the academic year.

Senate endorsement was unanimous, but contingent on meeting two demands. First, it was required that a written report of the results of the IGI analysis be circulated to all members of the faculty and administration. Second, it was also required that AFPC and the SfCKU task force conduct a workshop in early fall of 1973 for interested faculty to analyze the results and then move toward achieving the stated goals. Both conditions were acceptable to all parties and the plan of late January played out in full detail, although data collection took somewhat longer than expected.

The IGI questionnaires were finally collected in May, submitted for scoring in June, and the results became available in July. Based on a 55.7% rate of return and administered within each department and college of the university, the data were a perfect reflection of the USC faculty according to rank, length of service, department, and age. These data served as the focal point for an SfCKU workshop held in late July during which the plans were formulated for two workshops for presenting the IGI data and attendant issues to the faculty in early October.

The workshops were held, exposing the data to the analytic eye of approximately 130 faculty as well as 20-30 students. The two workshops were so successful in generating faculty and student input concerning the university's goals and manes for achieving them, that the administration subsequently mandated a parallel administration

workshop for supervisors down through the deans. What has resulted are a faculty and students divided into interest-defined task forces sifting and analyzing means for achieving institutional goals as proposed by faculty and administrative workshop input. These reports are being relayed to an administration sensitized to their content by workshops based on the same data and responsive to faculty and student concerns.

As with any loser's encounter with a banana peel, the SfCKU task force may land flat on its assumptions, but we have illustrated here the efforts of a large, complex organization attempting to give input to all its members in the establishment of organizational goals. The success of that effort will be told immediately by the output of the task oriented faculty student working groups and in the long run by the success of USC in years ahead in reaching or maintaining the goals established in mid-fall 1973.

Without reviewing Havelock's theory in all its detail, my role as institutional respresentative to SfCKU and initiator/organizer of the ad hoc discussion group does perhaps qualify me to comment from the practitioner's perspective on its strengths. Without a doubt, the key success of the ad hoc group and the IGI administration it facilitated were the linkages enabled by the group. Liberals were exposed to the capably expressed concerns of the conservatives. A direct line of communication for "unfiltered" faculty reactions into the office of the university's president was established. Faculty Senators were used as a line of communication between the Academic Forward Planning Committee and its constituency. Time and again the left hand (any one faculty committee) found out what the right had (a second faculty committee) was doing.

Clearly, openness of the group discussions was facillatory. Despite the dark rumors surrounding its existence, the group invited key personnel to its meetings to share in an open, unencumbered exchange of opinion. Based on fact not affect, debate was always stimulating, and generally facilitating of achievement of the group's goals.

From the initial meeting of four, the first expansion was directed more or less toward including influential opinion leaders in a manner that facilitated discussion and opened lines of communication. The next, and critical, expansion was through the dozen and a half to two dozen members of the group to the voting membership of the Senate and its constituency. The result was a faculty proposed, administration facilitated collection of IGI questionnaire data and a means for moving from data to reality.

Even as was true of the primal chimpanzee who first encountered the banana, despite initial frustrations the ultimate experience was well worth the effort. Faced now with a "bunch" of problems, we find the future...well, appealing.